



UNITED STATES  
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON, DC 20415-1000

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

JAN 30 2003

The Honorable James P. Moran  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Moran:

Thank you for your letter of January 28, 2003, on behalf of Federal employees and annuitants who may have been affected by the recent contract dispute between CareFirst Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) and Children's National Medical Center (Children's Hospital, Ambulatory Surgery Center, Physicians, and other Practitioners) (CNMC). You have asked us to consider conducting an additional Open Season under the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program to allow these Federal employees and annuitants in the Washington, D.C. area who switched their health care plans in the expectation of termination of coverage at Children's Hospital to have an additional opportunity to choose their FEHB coverage for 2003. I am pleased to inform you that the Office of Personnel Management can respond to this situation without incurring the costs of an additional Open Season.

Our current regulations governing the FEHB Program provide authority for Federal agency employing offices and retirement systems to accept belated Open Season enrollment change requests, when the employing office determines that the employee or annuitant was unable, for cause beyond his or her control, to enroll or change the enrollment during the time limits specified for the regular Open Season. This permits the employing office to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether an additional enrollment change opportunity is appropriate for the person in the given situation. We will therefore instruct Federal agencies in the Washington, DC area to accept belated Open Season changes from their members who were enrolled in the BCBS Service Benefit Plan and CareFirst BlueChoice last year, left the plan because of a concern about a continuance of health care services at Children's Hospital, and have filed no claims under their new plans.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kay C. James", is written over the typed name.

Kay Coles James  
Director